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ABSTRACT

A 1981-82 compilation of population and school statistics from Saskatchewan provides information on the context of rural education in that province. Between 1901 and 1981 the population fluctuated, reaching a high of 991,000 estimated population in 1982. Saskatchewan schools experienced a 19.6% decline in total enrollment from 1971 to 1981, and a 24.4% decline since the peak year of 1969. In 1981, rural schools had 44.9% of total provincial school enrollment (91,834 out of 204,697 students). To adjust to declining enrollments, which are expected to continue through 1990, rural school divisions have been forced to adjust their structuring of schools. The major trend has been toward schools offering all grades and away from the traditional elementary school-secondary school dichotomy. Although different towns have made different adjustments, the trend has been toward maintenance of secondary school offerings and adjustments in the elementary schools, generally by closing feeder elementary schools and extending the grade range of central rural secondary schools, or by retrieving secondary students from nearby central urban secondary schools and re-establishing K-12 schools in rural jurisdictions. Some rural schools equidistant from other centers with schools have been denuded of school population by transfer/transportation of students to the other centers. (MH)

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The purpose of this document has been to provide a description of rural education in Saskatchewan. It has been within the context portrayed here that the research reported by the other presenters from the University of Saskatchewan has been conducted.

The Population

Given that Saskatchewan has an area of 251,720 square miles populated by fewer than one million people, to describe the province as being sparsely populated would perhaps be an overstatement. Since the majority of the population has settled in the 160,000 square miles south of the boreal forest and Canadian Shield, and since 45 per cent of that population lived in rural areas, the population density in the areas under study was approximately three people per square mile.

Besides the sparsity of population, the province has had to contend with major fluctuations in the size of the population. As shown in Table 1, while the size of the population grew rapidly from 1901 to 1931, the effects of the Depression, World War II and farm mechanization were such that the 1931 level of population was not again reached until 1961. Again, during the period from 1968 to 1974, poor crops and grain prices resulted in a population decline of seven per cent from 964,760 to 899,700 people. With better crops, increased demands for oil, potash and uranium, the population has shown a 10 per cent resurgence to 991,000 people in 1982. These fluctuations have had marked effects on both the urban and rural

Table 1
Population of Saskatchewan 1901-1981
(as at June 1 each year)

Year	Total	Year	Total
1901	91,279	1972	914,000
1911	492,432	1973	904,500
1921	757,510	1974	899,700
1931	921,785	1975	907,400
1941	895,992	1976	921,320
1951	831,728	1977	937,000
1956	880,665	1978	948,400
1961	925,181	1979	959,000
1966	955,344	1980	969,328
1971	926,245 *	1981*	977,400
		1982*	991,000

Source: Statistics Canada

*1982 - Preliminary estimate - as at Jan. 1 of the year

populations.

As shown in Table 2, Saskatchewan has experienced changes in the number of live births not atypical to those experienced by other jurisdictions across North America. However, these changes have been compounded by the coincidental fluctuations in total population. This compounding has been evidenced in the school enrolment figures.

School Enrolments

As shown in Table 3, Saskatchewan schools have experienced a 19.6 per cent decline in total enrolments from 1971 to 1981 and a 24.4 per cent decline since the peak enrolment year of 1969. The percentage changes over the 1971-1981 period over the division levels have been 29.6, 34.8, 30.5 and 14.5 per cent decline in Division I, II, III and IV enrolments, respectively. The very optimistic enrolment projections contained in Table 4 have estimated 11.1, 12.1 and 8.3 per cent increases by 1993 in Division I, II and III enrolments respectively. The Division IV enrolments would be expected to further decline by 9.2 per cent by 1990 with a subsequent 6.1 per cent increase by 1993. The enrolment experience and projections for urban and rural schools have been parallel with no relative differentiation.

As shown in Table 5, the rural school divisions have 44.9 per cent of the total provincial school enrolment: 91,834 out of 204,697 students.

Table 2

Resident Live Births in Saskatchewan

Year	No. of Births	Year	No. of Births
1955	24,746	1973	14,806
1960	24,088	1974	15,118
1965	20,494	1975	15,230
1966	19,037	1976	15,969
1967	17,993	1977	16,547
1968	18,197	1978	16,551
1969	17,592	1979	16,944
1970	16,443	1980	17,057
1971	16,054	1981	17,206
1972	15,473	1982	N/Av

Source: Saskatchewan Health, Vital Statistics Branch.

Given the geography of the area served, these rural divisions have been attempting to provide quality educational services in a situation where the student population density has been, on average, 0.6 students per square mile. The problems serving this population have been especially acute in addressing the services for 18,362 Division IV students where the student density, on average, has been 0.11 per square mile or one student every nine square miles. Given the expected further nine per cent decline

Table 3
Annual Enrolments by Division Levels*
1971-72 to 1981-82

Year	Kindergarten	Total Division 1	Total Division 2	Total Division 3	Total Division 4	Total Divisions 1 - 4	Total Including Kindergarten	Special Education	Grand Total
1971-72	4,705	61,693	61,947	60,567	52,345	236,552	241,257	3,499	244,756
1972-73	4,341	56,406	59,999	59,046	49,894	225,345	229,686	4,523	234,209
1973-74	5,374	51,344	58,313	58,227	48,135	216,019	221,393	4,296	225,689
1974-75	11,405	48,287	56,234	57,228	47,171	208,920	220,325	3,738	224,063
1975-76	13,381	47,830	54,015	58,129	47,507	207,481	220,862	3,359	224,221
1976-77	13,939	48,089	50,001	57,750	47,706	203,546	217,485	3,512	220,997
1977-78	14,143	47,955	47,659	56,905	47,810	200,529	214,672	3,689	218,361
1978-79	14,317	47,538	46,748	53,571	48,242	196,099	210,416	3,306	213,722
1979-80	14,584	47,381	46,603	49,835	48,223	192,042	206,626	3,987	210,613
1980-81	15,025	47,323	46,441	47,282	47,262	188,308	203,333	4,271	207,604
1981-82	15,476	47,591	45,949	46,424	45,707	185,671	201,147	3,550	204,697

*Division 1: Years 1,2,3; Division 2: Years 4,5,6; Division 3: 7,8,9; Division 4: 10,11,12.

Source: Saskatchewan Department of Education Management Information Systems

Table 4

Projected Annual Enrolment in Saskatchewan Schools by Division Level
1982-83 to 1993-94

Year	Kindergarten	Total Division 1	Total Division 2	Total Division 3	Total Division 4	Total Divisions 1 - 4	Total Including Kindergarten	Special Education	Grand Total
1982-83	16,045	48,797	45,752	45,979	42,982	183,510	199,555	3,658	203,213
1983-84	16,065	50,276	45,849	45,788	41,138	183,051	199,116	3,650	202,766
1984-85	16,616	51,410	46,231	45,497	40,324	183,462	200,078	3,667	203,745
1985-86	16,734	52,219	47,493	45,419	40,047	185,178	201,912	3,701	205,613
1986-87	16,872	52,617	48,970	45,570	39,921	187,078	203,950	3,738	206,688
1987-88	16,939	53,233	50,046	45,908	39,629	188,816	205,755	3,771	209,526
1988-89	16,984	53,481	50,675	47,024	39,421	190,601	207,585	3,805	211,390
1989-90	17,053	53,636	50,847	48,269	39,355	192,107	209,160	3,834	212,994
1990-91	17,166	53,771	51,232	49,087	39,455	193,545	210,711	3,862	214,573
1991-92	17,179	53,981	51,281	49,516	40,258	195,036	212,215	3,890	216,105
1992-93	17,145	54,158	51,286	49,549	41,201	196,194	213,339	3,911	217,250
1993-94	17,086	54,208	51,272	49,779	41,739	196,998	214,084	3,924	218,008

Source: Saskatchewan Department of Education Management Information Systems

Table 5

Enrolment in Saskatchewan Schools By Grade and School Divisions Classification
September 1981

Type of Jurisdiction	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Special Education	Total
Rural School Divisions	6,772	7,639	7,270	7,110	7,116	7,143	7,268	7,856	7,501	7,053	6,462	6,051	5,849	682	91,834
Non-City Division Boards	379	412	396	400	352	389	379	370	346	337	233	244	220	22	4,479
City Public (1-12) Boards	5,373	5,350	5,080	4,986	5,129	5,052	5,042	5,119	4,964	5,024	4,740	4,754	4,908	1,467	66,988
City Separate (1-12) Boards	2,281	2,276	2,164	2,132	2,030	2,198	2,080	2,026	2,003	1,984	1,906	1,842	1,865	465	27,252
Special Comprehensive Boards	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,547	1,542	1,510	172	4,771
Other Boards (D.N.D.)	31	37	35	28	28	16	23	25	25	-	-	-	-	-	248
Other Boards (Govt. Aided)	49	44	29	33	24	20	10	17	13	2	6	9	5	216	477
Other Boards (Private)	20	63	56	61	56	54	63	110	130	342	433	581	635	28	2,632
Other Boards (Developmental Centres)	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	174	178
Northern Areas of Administration	567	919	559	512	520	492	405	484	389	302	200	101	64	324	5,838
Provincial Total	15,476	16,740	15,589	15,262	15,315	15,364	15,270	16,007	15,371	15,046	15,527	15,124	15,056	3,550	204,697

Source: Saskatchewan Department of Education Management Information Systems

in this student group over the next eight years, a major problem of the 1980's will be the maintenance of the Division IV programmes.

Structuring of Rural Schools

In order to adjust to the major changes in school enrolments, the rural school divisions have been forced to adjust their structuring of schools. As shown in Table 6, between 1972 and 1982 the school divisions had closed nearly 10 per cent of their schools and adjusted the divisional offerings in others. Inspection of this table would show that the major trend has been toward schools offering the complete gamut of Divisions I, II, III and IV and away from the traditional elementary school-secondary school dichotomy in structure. The policy parameters associated with these changes have been associated with the decline in elementary school enrolments and the perceived need to maintain the secondary school as the keystone to their organization of schools.

The crises facing the rural secondary schools could best be understood by perusing Figure 1. In 1980, the median size Saskatchewan school offering a Division IV programme had 72 students enrolled in grades ten, eleven and twelve. For the rural schools the median size was 66 students. Given the expected declines in Division IV enrolments, this median figure in rural areas should drop to between 55 and 58 students.

As reflected in Figure 2, there has been a direct relationship between the number of students enrolled in Division IV and the extent

Table 6

Number of Rural Schools by Division Structure 1972-1982

Divisions Offered	Number of Schools			Absolute Change 72-82	Expected freq.	Diff. from Expected
	1972	1979	1982			
I	22	31	23	+1	20	+3
I, II	176	148	146	-30	160	-14
II, (III)	17	9	8	-9	15	-7
I, II, III	176	165	144	-32	159	-15
III	12	8	7	-5	11	-4
I, II, III, IV	140	167	178	+38	126	+52
II, III, IV	0	2	9	+9	0	+9
III, IV	94	73	59	-35	84	-25
IV	23	24	21	-2	21	0
Total	660	627	595	-65		

of the school's Division IV programme offering. Given that a minimum of 21 credits over grades 10, 11 and 12 have been required for senior matriculation, it would appear that the major problem facing many rural jurisdictions will be the maintenance of the ability to offer an acceptable Division IV programme. Recognition of this problem has resulted in and will continue to result in boards making most decisions about the organization of schools on parameters

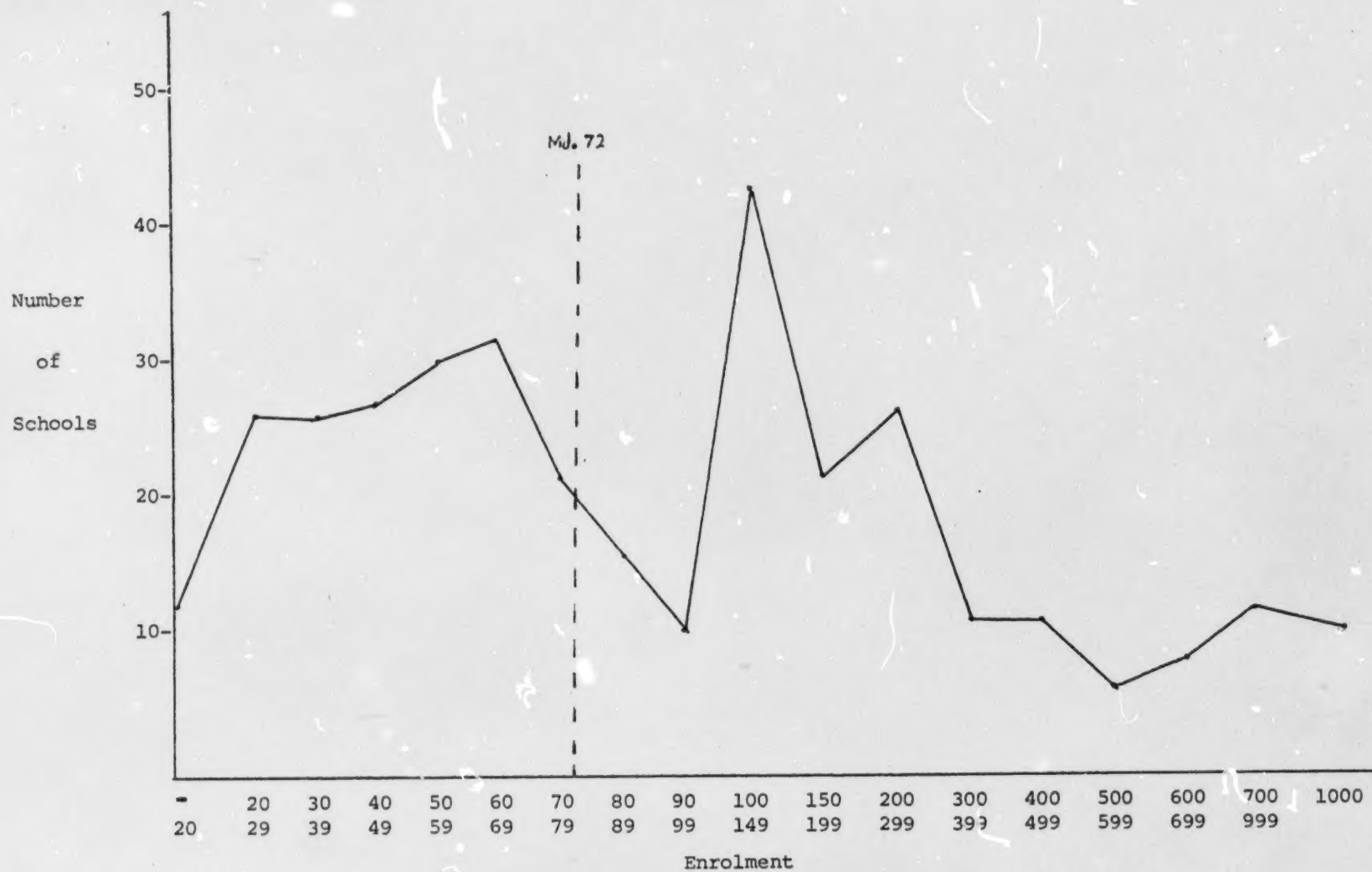


Figure 1
Number of Saskatchewan Schools by Division IV Enrolment

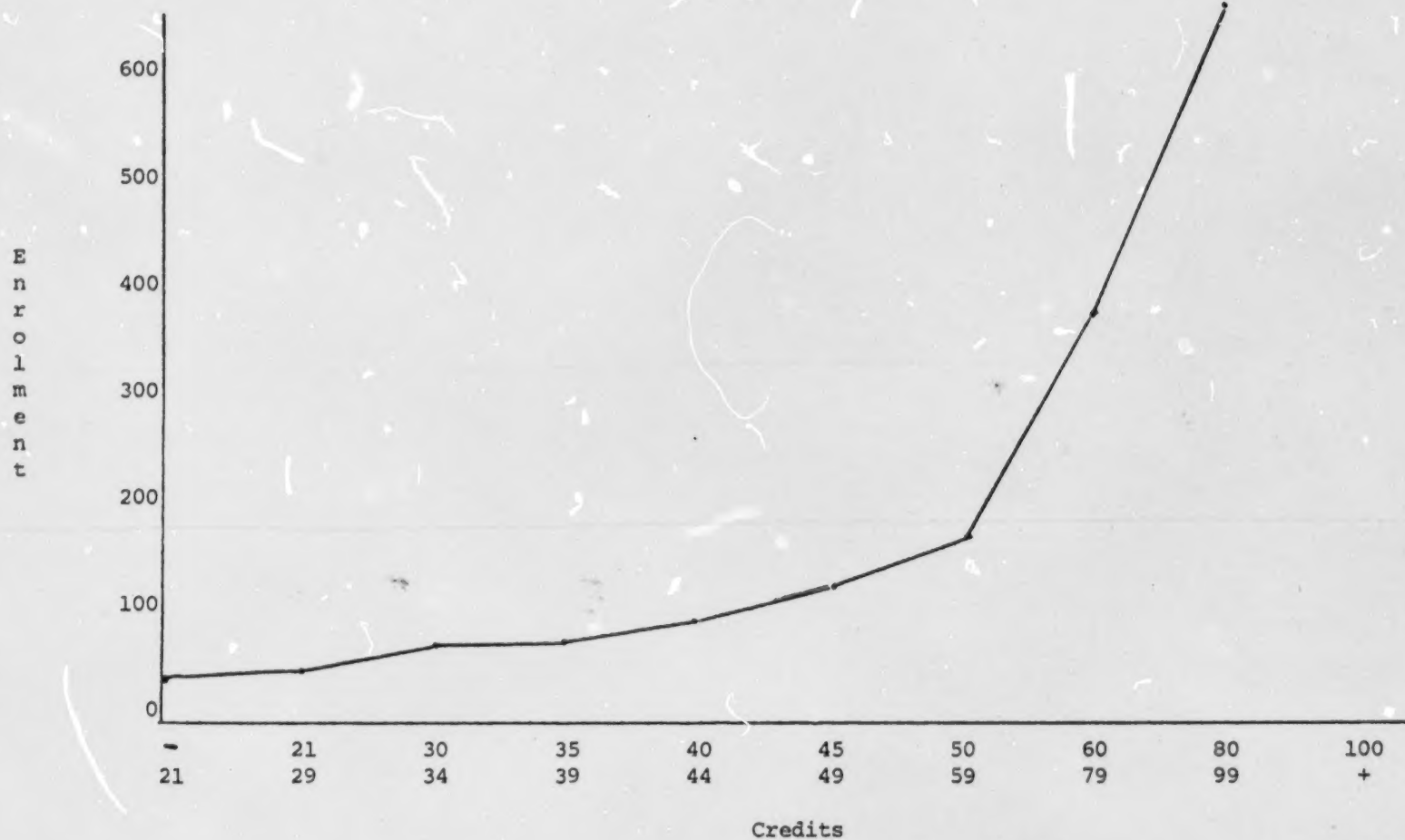


Figure 2

Number of Subject Credits by School Division IV Enrolments

dictated by the maintenance of the Division IV programmes. The shifts in school organizations would appear to have reflected this thinking.

The school organization structures would appear to differ significantly but could be typified according to the structures presented in Figure 3. Under Type I, where a central town with a good network of roads existed, there has been a tendency to establish a singular hierarchy of school with a secondary school in the town and feeder elementary schools at strategic points throughout the division. As the enrolments declined, many feeder schools have been closed; others had their grade range reduced; and, the central secondary school has had its grade range extended.

Under Type II, where several major towns with discrete service areas have existed, a multiple hierarchical structure has evolved with two or more central schools and some feeder schools in each hierarchy. As enrolments have declined, again feeder schools have been closed or reduced in grade offerings, and the central schools have been extended in many cases to K-12 schools.

Under Type III, several equal sized towns existed and K-12 schools have been established. As the enrolments have declined, the schools have been maintained and Division IV teachers have been required to teach at a lower grade level with each iteration in this decline.

Under Type IV, these near urban rural school districts, during the emphasis on improvement of high school programmes and increasing

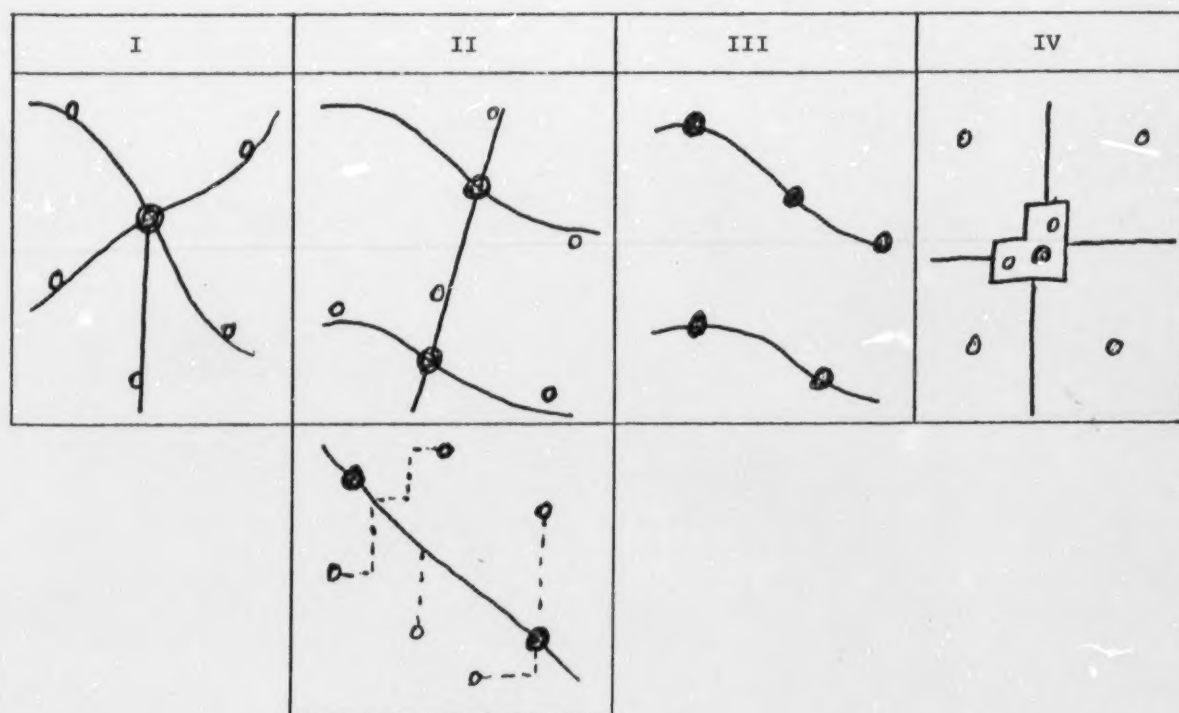
enrolments opted to enter into agreements with the urban jurisdiction wherein their students would receive their Division IV instruction in the urban secondary school. As enrolments at the elementary level decreased, these rural jurisdictions retrieved their secondary students one grade at a time with each iteration. The net result has been the re-establishment of the K-12 schools in these rural jurisdictions and a half empty central urban secondary school.

The press in all these changes has been towards the maintenance of the secondary school offerings. The adjustments have been made in the elementary school structures.

Transportation

Given that these studies have focused on rural education, the matter of school transportation cannot be ignored. Since the reader could readily hypothesize the extensive nature of busing in Saskatchewan and guess the multiplicity of transportation problems, the writer has restricted his comments to the contention that decision-making on the basis of school enrolments has been in many cases a derivative of a tautological construct. In many cases where a school had a substantial and "adequate" population, wherein the geographic area under consideration was defined by equidistance from other centres having schools, this population has

GEOGRAPHY



STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS

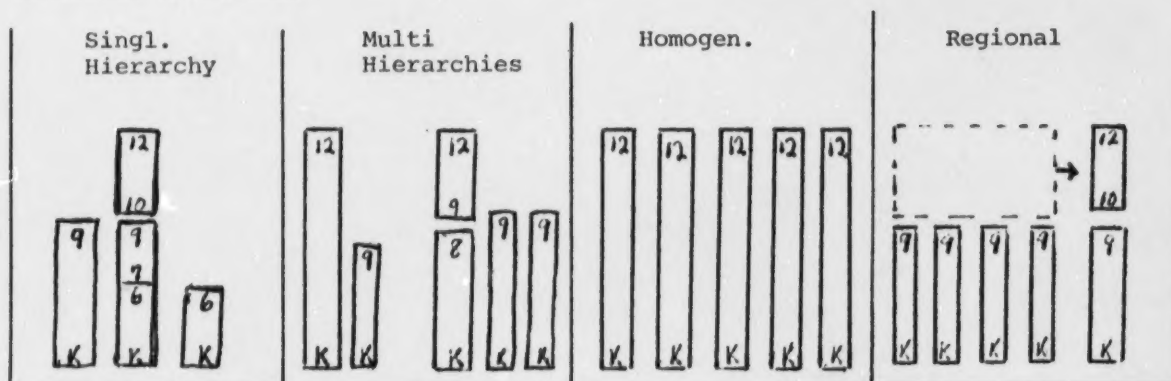


Figure 3

A Typology of Rural School Jurisdictions

been denuded by grade level transfers from the home school to the other centre; by bus route encroachment into the geographic area; by differential enhancement of school facilities and programmes; and, a grant system that has recognized student transportation but not teacher and facilities transportation. As C. E. Lindblom has noted policy-making has followed a "disjointed incrementalism" model rather than a comprehensive and deductive model.¹

It is my sincerest hope that this decription has provided a sufficient context for the readers' fuller understanding of the papers presented by B. Lucas, D. Dibski and L. Sackney.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The main sources of information for this statement has been Management Information Systems, Administrative and Support Services Division, Department of Education, Regina, Saskatchewan and Dr. Fred Gathercole's report on "Teacher Demand and Teacher Supply: 1982-83 to 1993-94.

In addition, the following source has been cited:

¹David Braybrooke and Charles E. Lindblom, A Strategy of Decision (New York: Free Press, 1963) 71.